Mr. Biehn’s Student Teaching Week One Journal

Cooperating teacher: Mr. Brenner

Supervisor: Dr. Dammers

Day one, March 15th

Today was the first day at Bridgeton HS. When I came in, I signed in at the office with Marie Cwik the Principal’s secretary. I also met Mr. Cubich the Music/Art District supervisor. I introduced myself and then they pointed me towards the band hallway which was E hall. When I got down there, Mr. Brenner was waiting for me and we started to talk about many things. Some of the things included the schedule, how their block schedule works, how the kids are personality wise, and that they had their musical going on all this week. The students are doing School House Rocks and their show will be Friday and Saturday, but unfortunately I have my own gig at Pitman for their shows at the same time this week. Most of the Band students were pulled out for the musical so not much got done in band class. When the band did go through some songs that they are working on for their concert, I sat in on trombone and helped fill out some parts. There are only 30 band members in class. The way the schedule works, is that Band lasts 84 minutes, then we have Prep and Lunch back to back and then two Piano Labs for the rest of the day. The Piano Labs have mostly Spanish speaking students. I watched as there were many instances Mr. Brenner and Mr. Cubich worked together to make the show go more smoothly. We also found out that one of the microphones on the stage had been ripped off, so it had to be replaced, and we went on a mic search. Mr. Cubich made a big deal about finding the old mic, but we all knew that somebody was fooling around and ripped it off, or pulled on it, and then put it in the trash. I enjoyed being with the students and I think we were connecting pretty well. I also met the principal later because she was busy, but Mrs. Williams seemed less interested in a music student teacher, so I did not bother her.

Day two, March 16th

Today was the same schedule and again, the Band class was taking a hit due to the school musical. Again, the hunt for the mic continued and we were calling people to get a new mic plus they received the wrong microphone foams for the individual mics for the cast. They were too small so they had to be sent back and then get new ones by Friday’s show. Actually it was by Thursday’s show because they had a matinee for the elementary grades. We spent our Prep period putting black paper over the glass in front of the pit orchestra to cover up the glare that would shine into the audience. We had help from Brandon and Vernon. I was learning more names faster this time, because I see the same students every day and for the same classes. Plus, the students would come down during our Prep and Lunch periods to either practice or talk about their lives (in its simplistic form). Things get a little more intensified but no need to go into great details. We also have to do homeroom in the morning, since each homeroom teacher gets an assisting teacher. Mr. Brenner was teamed up with Mr. Fran. Some of the band students are in the homeroom so they just follow us down when the bell rings. They have a TV tech room where they make morning announcements and Brandon/Vernon/and Joey usually make them. They have been advertising the musical each morning. I received a flower today from my homeroom for St. Patrick’s Day and I was shocked that somebody took notice to the student teacher. I must be making good progress with the students and making an impact.

Day three, March 17th

Today, we had a Department meeting later in the day after school. They discussed things like progress reports, midterm grades getting in on time, but it had already passed and some forgot to turn them in. The meeting involved Mr. Brenner and I, Mr. Klein who is the String Director, Mrs. Cranmer who is the Chorus/Piano teacher, and then other Art teachers. The meeting was quick and they even had some candy to hand out so that it was informal. Mr. Cubich was the first to grab a piece. He is a good supervisor and was once the Band Director, so he knows the deal, and he knows how the kids handle the class.

Day four, March 18th

Today, I stood in and watched the musical matinee so that I could say that I saw some of it, and show my support to the students involved, which are most of the band students. They did a pretty good job, and I could make fun of them in good taste after the show. One of them messed up counting by 5s up to 120. They skipped 115. He laughed when I told him. Sam and Zeus, who are in my homeroom, were excited and came up to me and asked if I liked it. Much of the week were teachers talking about the state budget and the possibility of rifting/firing. A lot of them were starting to feel the cutting edge. Mr. Brenner and Mr. Klein were starting to feel the heat themselves and were constantly trying to figure out who is safe due to tenure and experience.

Day five, March 19th

Today was the last day of the first week, and again things were taken up with the musical getting ready for its first night performance. We were helping set up tables and snacks for the show later in the day during some of the Piano classes. The Piano classes are learning how to read and play piano for the first time and speak little English. Some of the students speak English well but do not have good work ethic at times. Most of the time they have to do worksheets with theory and play through the books or the pages assigned and discussed. Mr. Brenner talks about the material in the beginning, gives the assignments, and then lets them practice it the rest of the time. On Wednesdays they usually have a playing test or verbal test about theory, then on Fridays they have a final chapter test involving the entire week, as a review.